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ABSTRACT

The two primary purposes of this document are to emphasize the enormous need for child care services for school age children 6 through 14 years of age, who for some reason, need care and supervision for part of the day as a supplement to parental care. Second, to determine the needs of working mothers through the administration of child care programs by public welfare agencies. The development of child care services for school age children must take into account the importance of sound maturing process for growth, balances between guidance and direction and expanding opportunities for independent thought and action, and provide for physical, emotional, intellectual and social growth. Generally a community needs four types of child care facilities in order to meet differing needs and desires of both parents and children. The four types explored are the day care center, family day care home, small group day care home, and in-home care. The final section gives some ideas and examples of ways an agency might organize its efforts in order to establish a network of good school age child care services. A two-page bibliography is appended. (BP)

School Age Child Care

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Building a Comprehensive Child Care Program

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School Age Child Care A Primer for Building Comprehensive Child Care Services

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Gertrude L. Hoffman **Child Care Specialist** **Division of Child and Family Services**

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE SOCIAL AND REHABILITATION SERVICE COMMUNITY SERVICES ADMINISTRATION

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Foreword

Child care services for the children of our country has at last been recognized on the national scene as an essential service that society, together with parents, must provide. The focus, however, continues on the needs of the preschool child, despite the fact that about 70 percent of the children whose mothers work are between 6 and 15 years of age. In addition, services for this age group not only are in extremely short supply, but often of poor quality.

With the onset of more extensive legislation to enable our Nation's poor to become financially independent, it is increasingly important that, as families move into job training and employment, their children are not neglected. Problems which beset so many young people today—such as drug abuse and alcoholism, delinquency, pregnancies out of wedlock—often stem from the inadequate care, guidance, and supervision they received during their early school and preteen years.

Public social service agencies have a mandate to provide child care for all children in the Aid to Families with Dependent Children program whose parents are in job training or employment. These agencies may also provide child care for other children in AFDC families who need it for such reasons as illness of parents, family dysfunctioning, mental retardation, and other stress situations. Far more attention, must be given to the development and provision of appropriate child care services for the school age children for whom the public welfare agency is responsible. These agencies must assure creative, dynamic, and developmental child care services to the millions of children who fall into their orbit of responsibility.

This primer is designed primarily to assist public welfare agencies in organizing and delivering child care services to the particular group of children. The Community Services Administration issues this pamphlet as an advocate for the right of all children to a happy, protected childhood.

David R Beecher

DAVID R. BEECHER, SR.
Acting Commissioner
Community Services Administration

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Introduction

The primary purpose of this publication is to emphasize, first of all, the enormous need for child care services for school age children 6 through 14 years of age who, for some reason, need care and supervision for part of the day as a supplement to parental care. Second, this pamphlet urges the administration of child care programs by the public welfare agency, especially for the school age child whose mother works.

More than two-thirds of the children of working mothers are from 6 through 14 years of age, yet the facilities and programs for the care of children of these ages are so few as to be statistically insignificant. In addition, most existing facilities for school children are group care and, unfortunately, are often characterized by overprotection of the child, immature programming, and too much adult surveillance. Someway, somehow, supplementary care must be found which provides the child with self-respect and an opportunity to mature according to his own capacity; which permits him to be an integral part of his neighborhood, to make his own choices as to friends and activities, and to have as much a chance to pursue his own interests as the child from the best imaginable home whose care is provided by his own mother in his own home. This will take some doing, but the public must comprehend the need—and the urgency of that need.

Both current and pending legislation place unequivocal responsibility on public agencies for the assurance and provision of adequate child care for families in very low income brackets. The public social service agency must take responsibility for rapid development of child care resources because care that is sufficient in quality and quantity is nonexistent. Particularly lacking is child care for school agers. The size of the need makes it imperative that a massive public program get under way at the same time that joint efforts with private agencies and private enterprise are expanded. It will take every effort on the part of all who are concerned with this problem to meet the needs for child care in the next 15 to 25 years.

This pamphlet is indeed a primer. There is very little experience on which to build a school age child care program. What is needed is manyfold: more case stories, more experience, more research on what works and what does not. From these can be built a body of knowledge that will help resolve the problems and lessen the unknowns. Much is already known about the ages and stages of growth and development and common human needs of 6- to 14-year-olds which can serve as the foundation on which to build good child care services. Through this kind of generalization, developing a child care program for children, particularly for children in the overcrowded, low income neighborhoods in the big cities or in rural isolation, becomes a real challenge.

This primer is intended to open a few doors and suggest a few ideas for comprehensive planning and delivery of school age child care programs which can be tested and evaluated and which are feasible for public social service agencies to administer and operate —IF they have conviction and commitment.

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Need of the School Age Child for Child Care Services

Upon entering kindergarten or the first grade, a child does not suddenly become a new and different creature, full blown, able to fend for himself, without fear of new and exciting experiences, without need for support and guidance and, most especially, for the warm, concentrated individual concern for his well-being from someone who loves him no matter what he does. That "someone" helps him in sorting out the pieces of his experiences, helps him to do things in such a way as to make friends, teachers, and the world in general respond positively to him.

Each child through the maturing process slowly, but painfully, arrives at his own degree of stability, security, and responsibility. His maturity depends, in large measure, on the quality and quantity of the support and nurture he has had in the growing process, particularly in the intellectual, physical, emotional, and social aspects of his living.

One of the grossest areas of unrecognized neglect lies in the degree of need for care of school age children who are left to care for themselves out of school hours, during holidays and vacation time, or when school shuts down for such reasons as teachers' meetings, boiler troubles, or too much snow. For many or for most of these children, loneliness is a way of life, superimposed early in their lives by the adults around them. This is particularly true for those whose mothers are already working, or are waiting for the day they go to school in order to go to work. Many others, left with an older sister, brother, indifferent neighbor or relative, live, to all intents and purposes, without the emotional and social substance they need, even though their major physical needs are taken care of in some fashion. Loneliness is probably the most forlorn feeling with which a child must cope.

This primer reviews the knowledge base which, hopefully, will lead the reader to an understanding of the real costs of these practices—to the parent, to society, and, most importantly, to the child himself.

Importance of Sound Maturing Process for Good Growth

This country places great emphasis on the intellectual development of its children, largely so they will be able to maintain themselves and not become public charges. Yet, the statistics show the grim reality of child neglect in the increasing rates of mental

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illness, crime, delinquency, and in the inadequacy of many parents to rear the next generation, often because of their inability to love and to be loved. Thus, the push for intellectual achievement cannot be divorced from achievement in other areas of life if the goal of sound, stable, mature adults in the coming generations is to be achieved.

Use must be made of the knowledge that now exists in the field of human behavior and development in order to help reduce the myriad difficulties being experienced by children and families and, thus, by society itself. We know far better than could be judged from our performance. In essence, State and local agencies must take a hard look at the child care services in their communities and set new sights, if such are needed, to assure that every child is receiving what he requires in order to move toward physical, mental, emotional, and social maturity.

The particular focus of this primer is to suggest the need for a second look at the child care offered children from 5 years to the age they are able to supervise and discipline themselves. While all child care services are too few and services not good enough, the dearth of care for school age children is well pronounced.

Successful Growing Requires a Balanced Routine

The years from 6 to about 11 are full of a growing feeling of importance. The child with good experiences senses his capacity to do things well. He starts to work hard at becoming good at something. School is one of the important doorways to helping him feel successful. However, the many hours and days outside of school also provide part of the foundation for the "grownup" feeling of importance and for belonging to the wider world. The struggle to achieve at this age prepares the child for the work world of the adult and for the capacity to cope with both progress and disappointment —the realities of life.

The key to successful growing through this age span is the balance between guidance and direction and expanding opportunities for independent thought and action. Each child will grow at a different pace. Some will learn more quickly than others, some will be more independent than others, some will master physical skills earlier than intellectual skills. Some will master nothing well if stable, understanding, supportive adults to emulate are missing or are in short supply. Much of a child's sense of importance, of feeling he has the ability to succeed, and of knowledge that he can learn comes from his playing with others his age in the street, on the playground, or in his own home with friends of his own choosing.

Children who have this balance, who have the opportunity to feel they "belong" and can identify with their friends, who have the flexible understanding and underpinning of stable adults, will use the feeling of being "good," of being accepted, of having accomplished, to become mature adults—those who fit into society, yet remain individually distinct. While at this age they seem to grow more worrisome and defiant, actually they are testing their own rules and yours, and, if the feeling of achievement and skill is satisfying, then sooner or later they will become a part of the mainstream of life.

The school age child has many needs which can and are met by a wide variety of community activities —through plans for the individual child, such as music or dance lessons, and through participation in agency or organizational programs such as the YWCA and YMCA, Boys' Clubs, Store Front Clubs, etc. But none of these can take the place of the adult who is responsible for a child before and after school, who talks with him when he is troubled by his friends or in trouble with his teacher, who helps him select the club or "Y" or swimming group or any of the other special things he likes to do on any given day, or sees to it that he has time to do nothing if he wishes. He is given freedom to play with another kid on the block, or to be a

part of the neighborhood gang shooting marbles in the street; he does not have to go to a different club, group, or activity each day in order to find shelter and guidance. Such a home base, like his own home, gives the child a place from which to choose and join in activities he enjoys, and not because a particular activity is the only substitute for being at loose ends.

Nothing can take the place of an adult who expects the child at a certain time, who takes time to listen if he feels like talking about his day in school, or who can simply say "Hi" when he comes in, parcel out some food to him and his friends, and wish him well as he takes off to play ball or to visit next door or shoot baskets in the school yard. And nothing replaces the expectation that the person responsible for him will be home when he returns.

It may be, the teenager will go on expeditions to the city with others his own age, find his way to downtown entertainment, visit museums, hobby shops, or the library. Or perhaps he will have a small job after school for which he gets paid. Yet, he needs a home base, with somebody there who knows what his job is and what he does, and that he is not being exploited or overworked, and that his job is not too much for him to carry.

Parents must remain the primary constant for children. But when they are not available, supplementary plans must be made. At the same time, no plan of care should interfere with the positive relationship between parents and children. If the positive aspects of the family relationship are not too strong, the plan for the child should be designed to increase the kinds of experiences that will make up for these and other lacks in his life. Parents, children, and agencies are the architects to be employed in drafting a child care plan to meet individual needs. Too often, the child is placed in a plan of care that is dependent on what is available in the community, rather than on what he needs. And sometimes no plan of care is made at all.

State and local agencies must take a new look at their services, bookkeeping practices, and rules and regulations which interfere with planning a child care service that will suit the situation rather than make the child fit the service already offered. A school age child has the capacity to make some decisions about the kind of plan of care he would like most, and he has some ability to suggest changes in that plan as he grows older. Thus, to ignore the child in making plans often heralds defeat. Even if he cannot verbalize his desires, his behavior soon informs the sensitive adults around him that all is not well and that changes are needed.

What School Age Children Are Like

School age children are far harder to handle than those of preschool age. These older children do not stay behind fences; they rebel against adult direction, and take delight in being rude and crude. On the other hand, they are exciting, venturesome, loving, creative, expansive, friendly, and pliable. Given a reasonably good start during the first 5 years of life, the 5- through 14-year-old can be fun to be with. Individual talents show up, and special interests and skills can be encouraged. He can create a sense of competition with himself so he achieves his own pace. He can entertain himself. He can reason, be reasoned with, and be reasonable. All of these characteristics make the care of these children not only fun but also rewarding.

Parents, agency, school, and, most important, the child himself are the quartet necessary to undergird the family when the mother goes to work. And parents will come home to a far happier household if their children have a satisfying, happy, friendly day in which at least part of their need for adult supervision has been met, particularly where there are three or four children in the family. The kind of nurturing the child receives throughout his life, his environmental experiences, his family relationships, the sense of self-importance, worth, and security he feels, and his eventual ability to attain, to contribute, and to produce

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all rest on the quality of his childhood. To develop in a healthy style and to be comfortable with the world take some sustained, invincible constancy in his life in the form of an adult or adults who provide the home base from which he ventures forth and to which he returns.

As the school age child progresses in the development of his physical, emotional, intellectual, and social self, the intervals between his need to touch a home base will be greater, but, until he is full grown, will not disappear entirely.

Preteens are "emancipated." At least they think so. And in many ways they are. But the sense of loneliness they feel when on their own is, perhaps, more devastating than for the younger child.

Preadolescence is the last stage of childhood, and its importance for the future of the child is immense. A good child care program will afford the maximum opportunity for meeting the preadolescent's normal growth needs. At this period in his life, neglect and loneliness will take their toll sooner or later, perhaps in mental illness, or in crime and delinquency, or in inadequate parenthood.

Nearly one-fourth of a school age child's year is spent in summer vacation or other holidays from school, and this is far too much time for him to be on his own without adequate supervision. However, too much grownup watching is as bad as too little. One of the reasons there is so little child care for school age children is that an insulting kind of overprotection has been offered in the past under the name of child care.

Essentially, then, what every child needs is a spot in the world where he is welcomed every day by a familiar grownup—one who is glad to see him and who offers him the opportunity to be himself, to be protected when necessary against the hazards of living, to help him recoup the losses of the day and regain the sense of his own worth. This grownup may be a relative, neighbor, or friend who is in the child's own home or one who is outside of his home. But the child does not want to be engulfed by adults who commandeer him and make all his decisions. School age children still need protection and care and a continuum of experiences which broaden their horizons and increase their individual capacity to enjoy and attain satisfaction.

Four Aspects of Growth

Millions of children in every social and economic group are high risk children in four important areas which give substance and meaning to life for all of us.

From birth onward, the human being must move forward simultaneously in his intellectual, physical, emotional, and social development or, somewhere along the line, he will come up short in his ability to cope with life. If any one of these four main roads to maturity are blocked for a child, he will show evidence of that blocking, and society and the individual will be the poorer.

It is far easier to determine the effects of deficits in physical and intellectual functioning than in emotional and social functioning. Thus, the damage done to the child because his emotional and social needs were not met often does not manifest itself until late in adolescence and sometimes not until adulthood when the remedies are far less effective.

For the most part, no one argues that children under 5 or 6 years of age do not need someone to "mind" them. Physical hazards are so great for this age that even the most deprived families watch these youngsters to some degree. But the magic day of entrance to school supposedly performs marvels and, from this point on, a new approach to the child is likely to be taken. To be sure, emancipation does accelerate upon entry to school. It only gathers momentum, however, and the ultimate goal is a long way off.

Physical Growth

While a school age youngster may have outgrown the age of incessant colds and sickness to which preschool children are prone, other physical hazards exist for him against which he needs protection.

Accidents are excessively high in the school age group. Sometimes, these are a result of the child's extreme need to excel in games and sports to the point that he forgets about caution or overestimates his own capacity. Fatigue, which can result in serious physical difficulties, may also be a problem when the child's need to be one of the crowd is of primary importance.

While physical and emotional maturity do not necessarily keep pace in these school years, this is the age when inadequate nutrition, emotional strain, improper lighting, ill-fitting clothes, shoes, etc., can seriously damage the child's future physical growth. Because recognition of health defects which may begin in this age is essential to the ongoing continuum of physical growth and healthy bodies, someone needs to keep track of the child on a constant basis, outside the competitive atmosphere of school, in order to be sure that the physical demands made of him and that his own expectations for himself are realistic and not taking a toll beyond his capacity.

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Emotional Development

Emotional health is no less important than physical health. In fact, while more difficult to assess, emotional well-being probably holds the key to physical, intellectual, and social development and is the most important factor in the development of a healthy personality.

We are born with differing sensitivities, differing capacities to feel, and differing susceptibilities to emotional deprivation. In addition to inherent differences, the child, to a degree, adapts to his environment and builds as many defenses against emotional hurt as possible. Sometimes, the defenses temporarily cover an injury that is irreparable. Emotional injury is dealt out in small pieces, not in one fell swoop; so a crisis does not occur immediately as a result of something that is done. The kind of emotional deprivation that comes from lack of supervision and attention is slow but corrosive. By the time parents realize this deprivation is taking its toli, repairing the damage may not be accomplished easily, if at all.

The emergence of an attitude of *independence* that accompanies going to school often hides the child's continuing need for *dependence*—dependence when he needs and wants it, not deferred until someone is available to give it.

Physical and emotional health are the most important forerunners of intellectual and social capacity.

Either physical or emotional illness, whatever the degree, affects the ability to learn and to fit into and enjoy society.

For the school age child whose dependency needs were not met before going to school and are not being met currently, trouble is in the offing. He either fears making his way in his own group and so stays with younger children, or he is likely, because of personality problems, to come into conflict with his peers, with the result that he may be saddled with nonacceptance for the rest of his life. However, if his emotional needs *are met*, he is likely to be a pleasant

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person to have around, eager to learn, curious, full of interests and pursuing them with fervor. Emotional health frees him to learn, to maintain his physical health, to do well in school, to achieve status in his group, and to face the realities of life with equanimity. It is in this age that an individual senses his ability or failure to be a success—to feel he can do and succeed, or to rate himself an "incompetent."

Intellectual Achievement

In our society, a premium is placed on the intellectual capacity and achievement of each individual. The early school years often are the key to the future. Children enter school with an excitement and a will to learn. They will learn, but how they learn and what they learn depend on the whole circumstance of their lives.

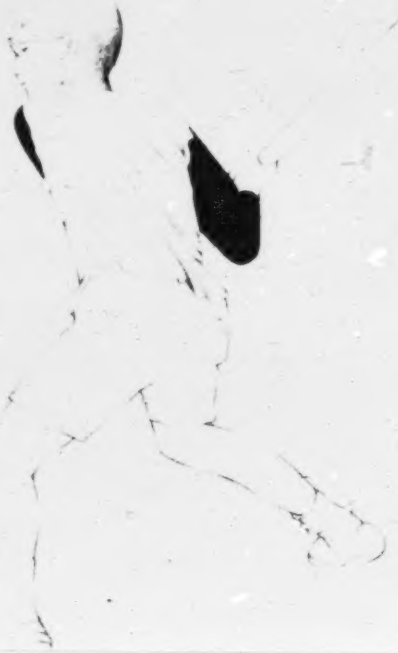
Schools assume responsibility for the learning that society requires for full participation in that society. Without some learning on ways to communicate, the individual becomes isolated from his world. However, if learning and intellectual "stretching" are consigned only to the few hours the child spends in school, then the development of his intellectual capacity will be restricted to three-fourths of the year. The child needs access to all fields of opportunity to explore, to create, to experiment, to be curious, to satisfy curiosity, and to absorb all kinds of skills, ideas, and knowledge. With the wealth of things to know about in this world, the school at best can only open doors and scratch surfaces. The child's whole day must be full of learning, although pursued differently.

What the child learns out of school will depend to a large degree on the supervision and guidance he receives. Children cannot be protected from learning evil or undesirable things. However, if enough avenues to adventure are open to them, the choices they make are likely to be better. A life-long experience with books—all kinds of books, different quality books—will help a child make good choices about his reading and is very likely to improve his standards of reading.

Similarly, the selection of his friends when he is an adult is likely to be better if he has a wide range of choice than if, as a child, he is only exposed to one kind of person. The same holds true of all learning experiences. A variety of learning experiences, coupled with a wholesome desire to learn and an excitement about the world and its wealth of knowledge, provide youngsters, even deprived ones, with the "basketful from which to select the good apples."

School and out-of-school programs have somewhat the same goals, but have different ways to arrive at them. No after-school program should be a continuation of the school day. Neither should it be devoid of intellectually stimulating activities. Not every move the child makes needs to result in a tangible, concrete improvement of his mind. Apparently aimless pursuits often may be part of the child's reflective thinking, giving him an opportunity to sort out his interests.

Any child care program—in the child's own home, in someone else's home, or in a day care center—must not only stress the importance of introducing ideas and opportunities for learning, but must also insist that the child be given time "to go it alone."



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Types of Facilities and Programs

In general, a majority of children whose mothers work stay in their own homes. Probably a large minority are in family day care and a very small percentage are in day care centers. Aside from those who are on their own or go to work with their mothers, the rest are in some kind of child care situation. None of these types of care are necessarily in the right proportion to need. More must be done to improve the quality of family day care, in-home care, and small group homes.

Generally, a community needs four types of child care facilities in order to meet differing needs and to accommodate the desires and choices of both parents and children. One or more of these kinds of care may be used at a given time, and the same child may need all four at different ages and stages of his development.

The Day Care Center

A day care center is the type of facility best understood by the general public. The purpose and function of a day care center are often misunderstood. A center usually cares for children in groups of peers and sorts them according to age and special need. However, a good center, at least for part of the day, simulates family living by providing opportunity for the experience and learning that accompany a mixing of ages. Good centers also make it possible for members of the same family to spend part of the time together. Day care centers must meet standards and be licensed by the State, or approved as meeting licensing standards.

Day care centers are likely to provide a structured program with group activities planned ahead either by the group or by the adults working with the group. Too often, not enough opportunity is provided for individual pursuit or activity without constant adult surveillance. It is like a family that plans Boy Scouts on Monday, swimming lessons on Tuesday, music lessons on Wednesday, and so on, and then wonders why, when their child leaves home for college, he makes the wrong choices.

A center offers great opportunity for play with educational equipment, access to wood working tools, gymnasia, and socialization with others. It may offer more opportunity than do other types of care for trips to museums, parks, ball games, and other such activities. But it is less likely to offer opportunities for reflective thinking, choice of friends, creating one's own amusement, and an opportunity to learn to work about the home and to share the chores of family life. For the school age child, who has been in school with his peers all day, it may prove that too much group activity in a center is intolerable.

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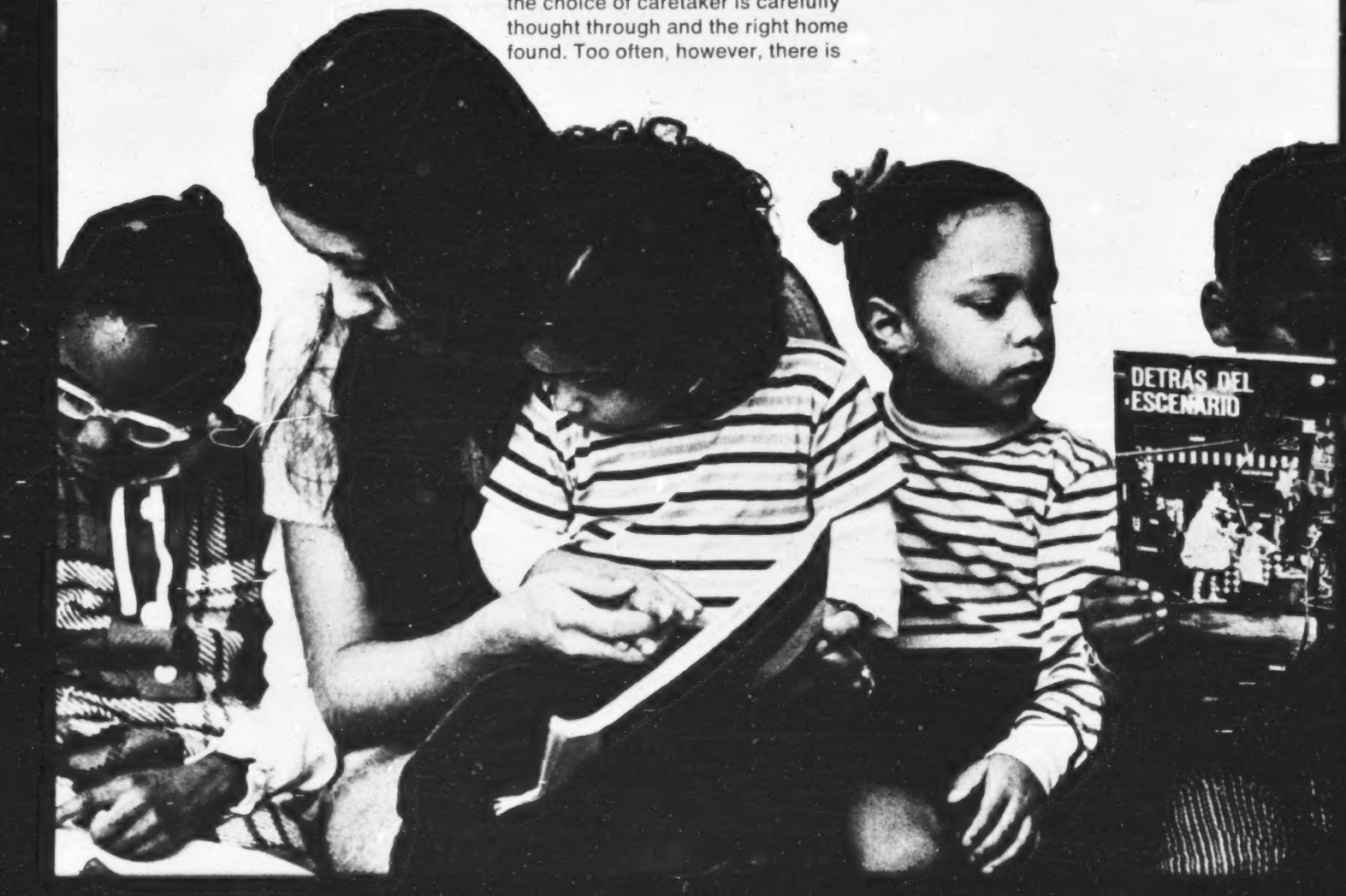
The Family Day Care Home

The family day care home usually serves five to six children. The home is that of another family, preferably in the child's own neighborhood, and the person providing the care carries on her household responsibilities, including care of the children, much as a mother would in her own home. The family day care home must also meet standards and be licensed. This kind of care is used by many parents. Quite often, more informal arrangements are made by parents in the home of a relative, a friend, or a neighbor. These maybe without agency supervision or control. In some States, these homes, too, may be required to have a license. Many arrangements made by parents are excellent, and the choice of caretaker is carefully thought through and the right home found. Too often, however, there is no real choice and the parents find the best person they can. Children are moved from one place to another as plans break down, with the result that the children experience instability or inconsistency in their care. This can be hazardous, particularly in this age of the nuclear family that does not have roots in one place or an extended family to fall back on.



Good family day care on a mass scale should come under the aegis of an agency or organization concerned with and knowledgeable about children and one that administers and operates the program for the benefit of the children and families needing care. This kind of care is an excellent and preferred method of care for many children. Infants and toddlers flourish in this kind of atmosphere; school children can remain in their own neighborhoods, attend the local school, utilize neighborhood resources at will, and function as they would from their own homes. The poor reputation of family day care as less than best is due, in part, to the lack of supervision, support, and financial backing of agencies. Usually, the payment to the day care mother is minimal, made only when children are in care. In addition, from the meager payment she receives, she is expected to provide good quality care, creative playthings, and nutritious food, and to plan for stimulating experiences.

In order to make family day care equal in quality to good group day care, the same attention must be given to standards, training, adequate pay, sick leave, vacation, and to assuring constancy of care through the provision of substitutes to fill in when illness or other emergencies arise. The family day care mother is entitled to special funds for food and equipment. She also needs funds to enable her to provide enriching experiences for the children, in addition to receiving a salary that is her own. The importance of her role in offering care to children cannot be minimized. Family day care will probably not be less expensive than good center care except for capital investment, but will be selected as the type of care many parents prefer because it more nearly meets the needs of their children, or because it is more feasible in rural areas and in urban neighborhoods.

The family day care home also offers opportunities for several children within a family to be cared for at the same place and can preserve, improve, or enhance good sibling relationships.

The Small Group Day Care Home

A small group day care home is one in which 10 or 12 children can be cared for and in which they function much as they would in their own homes. The children may be of varying ages and of both sexes, or of the same age and the same sex. Such a home may be an apartment or house rented by an agency with care provided by people employed by the agency. It may be a family home large enough to have this many children at one time. Both the family day care home and the small group day care home are especially useful for children who need care at night or over weekends, or whose parents are on different work shifts. Such homes provide consistency in the caretakers, no matter when the children need care.

Like the other two facilities, group day care homes must meet standards and be licensed, or approved as meeting licensing standards.

If a choice is possible, a couple should be employed for these homes. They should be there each day to offer stability, guidance, and concern, but should not smother the children with regimen and prescribed activities. In this kind of setting, each child can have his own friends, visit their homes, bring them "home" spontaneously, decide to go swimming, play marbles with the gang on the street, or stay at home and make cookies, look at television, or get help with his homework. In this kind of setting, preteens could be paid to help with the younger children a few hours each week but are not overburdened with the total responsibility for the care of younger brothers and sisters. From this kind of home, the children can participate in all kinds of community activities, such as public recreation, Little Leagues, Girl Scouts, Boys' Clubs, day camp, and others. This kind of setting is a

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slightly new concept, but appears to have many features especially attractive to school agers and preteens that a day care center or family day care home may not offer.

The day care center, the family day care home, and the small group day care home all offer care away from the child's own home and traditionally have been thought of as "day care."

In-Home Care

In-home care is the fourth kind that needs to be available for part of the day for many families. Unfortunately, there is a tendency on the part of the public to discount the value of in-home care for children. The notion that it is only a babysitter service and less good than other care is reinforced by agencies that do not assume any responsibility for the quality of the care or training and supervision of the people providing care.

In-home care can be given by relatives, friends, or neighbors, and usually is. However, agencies must look at the formal development of this type of care and employ, train, and supervise a host of people who can go into children's homes where this is the best plan for the family, especially where there are children with special problems. Either the agency or employment service should provide accredited personnel for in-home care.

In-home care can be provided through homemaker service under agency auspices—where a trained homemaker is placed in the home, usually because of the illness of the mother—or through the type of care discussed above which is sometimes designated as "care-giver" or "caretaker" service.

The large majority of the children in need of child care are in their own homes. Middle-class families use a "babysitter," or a maid who is quite often primarily required to take care of the house and, as a secondary job, to take care of the children. Grandparents, aunts, and sometimes older teenagers are giving the care. None can argue that the loving relative is an important person in the child's life, and when he or she is available, wants to care for the children, and has the capacity to meet their developmental needs, this is a superior plan. However, in today's society, it is less likely that adequate care from such source can be found. Grandparents and aunts are, themselves, in the labor market, are physically or emotionally unable to provide the kind of care and supervision the children need, or live in some distant place.

Whether or not the people providing care are relatives or employees of an agency, ways and means must be found for imparting to them the importance of the task and of offering them help, guidance, and training.

A Challenge to Public Agencies

We don't have all the answers on good child care, but we know far more than our actions would lead one to believe. The old patterns of doing are not good enough today. The status of the job of caring for children must be drastically raised. We are far behind most other countries in appreciating the importance to the future of good child care practice.

Slowly, this country seems to be assuming a more positive stand toward services to children under 6. Head Start significantly opened the doors to this change. But, at this time, the school age child is still the forgotten child in terms of receiving adequate child care services. In no way is this intended to deter the upward movement of services to preschool age children, but only to emphasize that to offer good care to children of this age group and then to cut them off at age 6 from all guidance and supervision outside their school hours is likely to negate much of the advance made during the first 5 years. Penny wise and pound foolish?

The public social service agency should be in the vanguard in developing model child care services for school age children. The agency need not do this alone, but it must lead the way. Child care

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is primarily a social service, needed by large segments of the population, and the public social service agency, in every county and political subdivision, has the mechanism for the delivery of services where other agencies do not exist.

Whatever the aegis of the thrust to develop and deliver services, whatever the administration and source of funding, whatever the population to be served, and whatever types of care are to be offered, the communities must be involved in establishing the quality of service children need, in assuring that the children's needs for service are, indeed, being met, and in helping parents and guardians to participate in the development of the kind of care offered. Without the deep involvement of both parents and children, a school age child care program will fail.

How To Do it

The following is not a technical "how-to-do-it" section of a manual, but has some ideas and examples of ways an agency might organize its efforts in order to establish a network of good school age child care services. It also has some "how-not-to-do-it" ideas.

Make a Quick Survey of Need and Resources

No elaborate, lengthy research is needed to establish need and to measure it against existing resources. A map of the area to be included in the planning (State, county, city, metropolitan area) can, in a very short span of time, have marked on it: population, labor force, number of working mothers, income levels, ages of children of working mothers, numbers of families receiving assistance under the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program, and ages of parents with their years of schooling.

State labor departments can supply information on available jobs, skills needed, and potential for expansion of job opportunities. State licensing agencies, as well as public and private social agencies, can assist in locating licensed or approved child care facilities and in supplying the ages of the children they serve. The schools may also be of help.

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if not, use what is available and make some educated guesses as to need and where to locate new services. For example, in low income families and among AFDC recipients, mothers between 18 and 35 or 40 years of age with 10 or more years of schooling are more likely to find employment and get on the career ladder than those younger or much older. They are also likely to be the group with children in need of care.

However, anyone who might make a good person to work with these children should not be overlooked. Some of the older women whose children have recently gone to high school may be excellent people to take on a small number of school agers and preteens, either in their own homes or in the children's homes. Most of the time, it would be a part-time job. These possibilities can be on the map, too, along with the location of schools, store fronts suitable for the teenagers, churches, and other potential buildings for group day care homes or other facilities.

It is important to locate other resources that can enrich the program, such as boys' and girls' clubs, swimming pools, parks, recreation programs, performing arts groups, creative arts and crafts opportunities, libraries, any or all of which can "stretch" the body, mind, and spirit of children.

Get People Involved

A unilateral effort by any agency will likely produce meager and ineffectual results. The first and most important action to be taken is to get an enthusiastic, dynamic committee going that includes all kinds of people: legislators, parents, neighbors, and, above all, young people among those likely to need service. Other agencies, as well, should be included.

If the plan is to be statewide, then the main committee will need satellite committees in counties and cities throughout the State. Share with them all information, including problems. Secure help for the survey, particularly from parents and young people who know their neighbors and neighborhoods. Get advice and support for budgets, training programs, insurance responsibilities for protection of children and the people giving care, staffing, and rules and regulations (which should be kept flexible). These children will not be kept behind fences, and risks are heavy if they are to have the opportunity to learn to be responsible for their own behavior and safety.

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Once the facts are gathered, lay an action plan with beginning and ending dates for accomplishing your objectives. Establish priorities on the basis of what resources for care are available and what are needed. For example, the choice may be to cover thoroughly two of the most deprived areas in a city with all kinds of facilities. Set a date for completion of establishing all the facilities, training the personnel, getting the parents in the job training or employment program, securing adequate funding. Perhaps the priority will be to establish group programs in the school, either on a statewide or a citywide basis. Or it may be to develop a staff of trained personnel to go into and care for children in their own homes while their mothers work.

The priority may be to try to get preteen programs started. Other age groups are more likely to have some kind of care, but the serious difficulties that face preadolescents in our society should arouse great concern on the part of parents and others interested in young people. The preteen age group will be hard to involve, and certainly not in anything called "child care." What it is called, however, is not important, as long as the essential ingredients for the right amount and kind of guidance are included.

Choose the easiest job to do first (whatever that seems to be), in order that committees can experience a feeling of success. Then tackle the hard ones, such as persuading funding agencies, both public and private, to allocate funds, and landlords to repair or remodel the places you need. Use an abundance of citizens for this job; they have the power. Don't ask committees to vote on budgets they have not helped to build step by step. This is rubber stamping, and "busy work" has no substance. Be sure all committees know exactly what their functions are. Clearly, an advisory committee is not a governing board, but the sound advice of a good committee will often engender support and social action on behalf of the program.

A State committee will deal with issues that are different from those of the neighborhood committee. For example, a State committee would more likely establish guides on program content, while a neighborhood committee, knowing the local resources, knowing its children, knowing the hazards and the problems indigenous to the area, would detail a program that could meet its needs.

A rural program would be altogether different from a city program. In the city, it is a delinquent act to throw rocks; not so in the country. The State committee would be deeply concerned with flexible policymaking, public funding, public relations and the dissemination of information, and appropriate, statewide standard-setting that meets the differing needs of all parts of the State. Most important, committee meetings should be held at times the parents can attend and participate. Travel costs, child care, and other expenses connected with committee functioning should be handled carefully so that parents and young people can participate fully without embarrassment.

Above all, allot staff the time to work with committees and subcommittees, but do not do the jobs for the members. Help them to do their tasks, to write reports, to keep minutes, to be good chairmen, or whatever their role is. The administering agency should sustain the enthusiasm and impetus of committees, but nothing is more deadly or dishonest than to take over responsibility for the job and give credit where it is not due.

It should not take more than 6 to 8 months to complete the establishing of committees, plotting on the map, correlating the information, and establishing a 5-year plan of action. Of course, everything will not go smoothly and according to plan. Some target dates may have to be changed. However, if no target date was met and no action took place, one of several things must have happened: the plan was too ambitious and not realistic; commitment and enthusiasm were lagging; or the committee was not functioning well. The next step would be for the agency and the committee to examine and assess the difficulties and search for new ways to reach their goals.

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If there is no one on the staff who genuinely knows how to work with committees and how to involve parents and young people and enable them to take action, then hiring a person to do this may be necessary. There is no better way to spend some of the committee's money than to have a consultant, trained to work with parents and community groups, to provide inservice training and give ongoing consultation, even if he cannot be a permanent member of the staff. The involvement of all kinds of people is the cornerstone of any program on behalf of children, and the functioning of child care committees of all sorts cannot be left to chance.

In essence, then, use all the ingenuity and creativeness you have to keep the committees strong, parent involvement vital, and enthusiasm high. Imbue the groups with a zest for resolving conflicts and problems.

Assess Agency Structure and Organization for Delivery of Day Care Services

No one way is the right way to organize the agency for getting the child care services where they are needed and to be certain that every child is in the best possible care program for him. The size of the need and the pressure to get quality care available to every child who can benefit from it demand special child care staff in agencies, either of moderate or large size. Of course, in a rural community with only a few children in need, a child

care unit would be ridiculous. But, perhaps, such a staff group could be shared among several adjoining counties and, in this way, render better service than the single, generic service worker in one county. Most agencies, however, can use more than one person full time in developing day care resources alone. If the agency operates centers, a different staff for that part of the program will be needed. Teachers, recreation workers, specialists in art, the dance, in athletics, etc., may be necessary. If the program consists mainly of in-home or family day care or group day care homes, the agency will need home study and recruitment staff and a vital training program.

A good family day care program should not require a worker to supervise more than 20 homes, and preferably not more than 10. This still constitutes quite a caseload if each home has five or six children and their families to work with. If the child care staff only supervise the family day care home, and the family caseworker helps the mother plan the type of care, does all the counseling and placement, and assumes responsibility for helping with other problems, then a different workload for the resource developers is appropriate. If special staff are employed for training child care personnel, then the workload for the facility supervisors and family workers will be different.

The key to the quality and the administration of the child care program is its director. It is he who sets the tone, resolves the conflicts, and keeps an orderly and efficient administration with a minimum of confusion. The director should spend at least 80 percent of his time administering the program; he should not become bogged down with doing the technical tasks that should be delegated to staff. A supervisor for five to seven workers in a family day care or in-home care program is desirable. However, if group supervision is used in part, more workers could be included. Once some stable facilities and child care personnel are trained and experienced, changes in workloads and supervisory loads can be made.

In large cities, almost every neighborhood of a 10-block radius will need an outpost for constant recruitment and development of family day care homes, group day care homes, and in-home care workers. Small group homes, operated by the agencies, require different skills and need special workers in the agency for establishing the homes and training the house parents or staff. Part of the payment for the staff could be free rental of the house with provision for living there; this would be especially valuable if night or weekend care is needed for some children.

County-administered programs will differ in staffing from State-administered programs. Where licensing workers carry part of the service tasks, a different pattern of staffing will have to be established.

To determine the staffing pattern best suited for your agency, examine all the jobs to be done: training, both preemployment and ongoing, and inservice of both agency workers and child care personnel; staffing committees; counseling parents on child care and helping them make choices; developing back-up plans; supervising agency workers, including child care personnel, records, and paperwork.

People caring for school age children, especially when care is not provided in a group setting, where the director is on call, need far more support and help than those caring for preschool children who are kept under constant surveillance. One reason there is so little school age child care is that it is much harder to find people willing to take on the responsibility and risks of caring for other people's children of this age. They fear the liability. Agencies must assume some of this responsibility and arrange to pay coverage for necessary insurances and backing in case of damage suits.

Staffing the central office of the State agency is a totally different problem. Consultants, community planning experts, social service designers, child development specialists, and health personnel may all be needed to give support

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to, prepare guides for, help in training, and work with State committees. It is unlikely they will operate programs directly. But equitable policies on costs, parents' fees, salary scales, personnel policies, merit system procedures, and a myriad of other administrative matters, as well as monitoring and evaluation throughout the State, and negotiations with other public and private agencies and private enterprises to assure maximum use of existing services and buildings and to avoid overlap and duplication may be necessary at either the State or local level or both.

The key to an efficient, flexible, creative program will rest with the competency of the administrator of the program. He must be selected for his ability to organize, delegate, and free staff to "do their thing."

Helping Parents Choose

A cursory exploration with a number of agencies about their practice of counseling parents on employment and child care indicates that workers desperately need an intensive training course on the nature of child care, the pros and cons of each type of care, and how to help parents make a good choice. If, however, after exploring with parents the various types of agency-sponsored care, they decide to employ someone to come into their home, then the agency should assist the parents in becoming good employers. This involves understanding the law regarding Social Security taxes, the advisability of making definite arrangements about wages, whether or not a hot meal is to be prepared, hours of employment, and all such matters that will stabilize the plan and offer the child what he needs. The agency cannot deny its responsibility as a service agency to offer help, and this help should be offered in such a way that it is accepted voluntarily.

In studies made on child care in which parents were asked their preference, repeatedly they preferred the plan they were most familiar with rather than choosing a plan based on knowledge of what it could offer the particular child.

An objective appraisal with the parents of what each type of care can and cannot offer, the availability of the different kinds of care, and the opportunity to have a mixture, or to change when circumstances change can allay many of the fears and apprehensions parents, children, and the staff have. It is especially important for the child to know what agreements have been made. He can accept limitations on him if they are mutually arrived at. All this implies a well-trained, well-informed staff.

Financing

Financial support for child care services will come from many sources. Parents' fees, private philanthropy, business, industry, labor, and public funds are used to help pay the cost of these services. Increasingly, combinations of funding resources are being used on behalf of families and children who are not able to pay the full cost of care. The use of private funds, as matching for Federal funds, is increasing. In light of the large number of children needing child care and the cost of good care, all sources for financial support are needed.

The costs of good child care are high—they must be if children are to have their chance to grow and develop as they should. And, if the status of caring for children is to rise, child care services will need to be subsidized from some source.

Most families are unable to pay the total cost of child care, regardless of their income levels. Like education, whether private or public, fees do not pay the bill; endowments, Federal, State, and local funds, alumni gifts, and special building funds are needed to keep schools operating.

Child care is now such a mass need and is so important to the rearing of children in our society that government, in concert with parents and communities, will have to find ways to make it available to all children who need and can benefit from it. New designs, new laws, new appropriations are being promulgated every day, and agencies and organizations need to be prepared to make changes quickly in fiscal procedures to take advantage of the rising tide of interest and investment in children. To keep from opening up child care opportunities because to do so will disrupt the bookkeeping system, or because the administration of the program will be more complex, denies the purpose of the public social service agency: to serve people. Flexibility and accountability should be the guide to use of funds for child care.

Competition for funds will increase regardless of higher appropriations. The Nation's major thrust is services to children under 6. Yet millions of school age children are in need of care. A strong group of advocates is needed to focus attention on the needs of and to develop resources for this age group. The program for school age children will be costly. Probably, per hour and per day costs will be higher than for preschool children.

Funding for child care is not static. A section on financing in this primer, spelled out in detail, would be obsolete almost immediately. Agencies only need to read the signs carefully to predict an increase in the flow of funds from many sources for child care. Agencies should be ready to use these funds creatively. Unexpended funds may be indicators of poor planning, rigidity of regulations, lack of concern, inerta, ineptness, or lack of community support.

Child care is an important, expensive service, and it is needed by millions of children in all socioeconomic groups. It has a current urgency and groundswell of support upon which agencies should capitalize. The school age child desperately needs care, and funds must be channeled into planning, developing, experimenting with, and changing child care services until the right combinations are found that will keep care and supervision at a high level.

* * *

Children in the inner city ghetto, children in rural America, children in migrant families, children from minority groups—all have very special needs. And so do children in white, middle-class America who may be living in isolation in suburbia, without exposure to the real world where they, too, must learn to choose. The excellence of a child care program is measured by the degree to which it meets both the common needs of the group it serves and, more importantly, the individual needs and goals of each child and family.

Public agencies must be in the vanguard in developing school age child care programs. Good child care must provide a home base for children—and it is a social responsibility, as well as a social benefit, to provide such care. Since this care is primarily a social service, public social service agencies should take the major leadership role.

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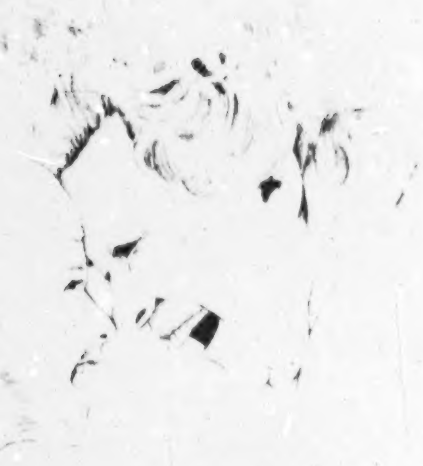

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